



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE JEWS IN BABYLON.

By WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER,
The University of Chicago.

THE Babylonian exile, in many respects at least, is the most pathetic, as well as the most significant, period of Israelitish history.

There had been two principal classes before the fall of Jerusalem. The first included those who had been honestly sincere in their devotion to the national God, Jehovah. These had been faithful to him under circumstances of the most trying character. They had seen ruin staring them in the face; they had realized that this must in some way be occasioned, or at least permitted, by their God; and yet their faith in him had not diminished. Jeremiah was the leader of the faithful few, and his disciples had stood firmly and consistently with him through the great catastrophe. These were they whose eyes had been opened to the fact that new methods were being employed by Jehovah, and that the development of the nation in the future was to lie along a line very different from that of its past history.

The second class included, perhaps, several groups. Of these one group was made up of those who were utterly indifferent to all religious matters; another, of those who had openly and avowedly served other gods; still another, of those who had secretly devoted themselves to the worship of other gods, although, ostensibly, they were still adherents of Jehovah; and then there was a fourth group, made up of those who pretended to entertain a profound faith in Jehovah, the God of the nation. They believed, or pretended to believe, that no catastrophe was to be expected, because Jehovah in past years had made promises to his people which he would unquestionably keep—promises with reference to the future of Jerusalem and the position of the chosen people among other nations. And besides, had he not in

former years again and again delivered the city from what seemed to be an inevitable fate? It was impossible to suppose that a god would forsake his own people and allow his own temple to be destroyed. At all events, in doing such a thing the god would acknowledge his weakness, as compared with the gods of other lands. It will be seen that the members of this second class, to whatever group they belonged, were monolatrists, rather than monotheists. Indeed, the doctrine of monotheism had not yet entered into the real life and thought of the people as a whole.

When the great event has happened, and the people of Jerusalem find themselves scattered in exile, the change is the greatest imaginable. From one point of view a greater revolution cannot be conceived. From another, it would seem to have been only a step higher in the wonderful evolution which was taking place.

The faithless Jews, those who belonged to the second class described above, who really did not know Jehovah, though possibly they may have imagined that they were in possession of such knowledge, do not experience serious difficulty in adjusting themselves to the new situation. It mattered not much to them where they lived. It mattered still less, perhaps, what god they might worship. In spite of the thousand years of patriarchal and prophetic history back of them, they had scarcely lifted themselves away from the habits of mind and the tendencies of thought, or from the pagan superstitions, of the nations around them. In other words, the differentiation which had been going on for ten centuries, the result of which was to separate and elevate a portion of Israel from the dense ignorance and the gross idolatry of the Semitic world, had not yet affected this, the lower portion of the Israelitish humanity. They were, therefore, as comfortable in Babylon as they had been in Jerusalem—perhaps more comfortable. To be sure, their national pride had been humiliated, but it was not difficult for them to transfer their affection to the god who had shown himself superior to their own god, Jehovah. They felt, therefore, that no time should be lost in lamenting the past; that Jehovah had shown himself unworthy of their affection and worship; that

those who would remain faithful to a god who had thus acknowledged his own inferiority were utterly without understanding, and deserving of reproach. In sneering tones they would reproach their brethren; and so great was the hostility of their feeling that they did not hesitate to buffet, and even spit upon, those who remained faithful to the old religion in this, the hardest period of its history.

The situation of the faithful Jews, those who made up the first class described above, was utterly different. These pious ones were so constituted that they could not bring themselves into adjustment with the new situation. Their days were spent in mourning the downfall of Jerusalem and the wreck of the holy temple. Their faith in Jehovah was still maintained, but it was a faith accompanied by despair. All that was beautiful in life had vanished. All that was bright had become dark. To them the only land was the land of Palestine, but this was in the hand of their conquerors. The holy city, the heir of the promises of all the past, was in ruins. The temple, representing as it did the traditions of a thousand years of worship, had been destroyed. Every conception of the religious life was thus rudely broken, and as yet there had been neither time nor opportunity for the growth of new conceptions in the place of the old ones. Their physical suffering must likewise have been great, because it was impossible for them to settle down into the new life.

Every hour would be a reminder of some lost privilege. Every morning and every night their hearts would go back to the beautiful city of which only the ashes remained. It was one of these faithful ones who sang on his way into Babylon the song recorded in Ps. 137:

By the rivers of Babylon
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,

Let my right hand forget her cunning.
 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
 If I remember thee not ;
 If I prefer not Jerusalem
 Above my chief joy.

The sufferings of the faithful few were intensified because of the attitude of their own brethren on every side of them. They were pained by the fact that these, their brethren, had utterly forsaken Jehovah. But more than this, they reviled and dishonored his name ; and, besides, these reprobate Jews held up to reproach and bitter taunt the faithful ones whose misery was already greater than they could bear. Their sufferings are described most pathetically by the writer of Ps. 22 :

But I am a worm, and no man ;
 A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
 All they that see me laugh me to scorn :
 They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
 Commit thyself unto the Lord ; let him deliver him ;
 Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.

Be not far from me ; for trouble is near ;
 For there is none to help.
 Many bulls have compassed me :
 Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
 They gap upon me with their mouth,
 As a ravening and a roaring lion.
 I am poured out like water,
 And all my bones are out of joint.
 My heart is like wax ;
 It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
 My strength is dried up like a potsherd ;
 And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;
 And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
 For dogs have compassed me :
 The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me,
 Like a lion, my hands and my feet.

But the greatest agony which they were called upon to experience was that which grew out of the apparent fact that Jehovah himself had really deserted them. What, after all, could be the explanation of this attitude of indifference and of actual hostility on the part of God toward his own people ? Had they, the

faithful ones, done that for which they thus suffered? Had they not been loyal to him through all those last, dark days of Jerusalem's history? Were they not even now holding themselves aloof from Babylonian influence on every side, and likewise from the entire drift of public sentiment among the Jews themselves? They were called upon to withstand, not only the opposition of the Babylonians, but that of their own brothers and friends. And yet, at the very time when most of all they needed the help of their God, Jehovah, he had seemingly absented himself. It was one of these heart-broken, yet still faithful, Jews who poured out his soul to Jehovah in the words of Ps. 22:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
 Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
 O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not;
 And in the night season, and am not silent.
 But thou art holy,
 O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
 Our fathers trusted in thee:
 They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
 They trusted in thee, and were not ashamed.

This, then, was the situation in the period of the exile. The picture, if once we may be able to see it in its proper perspective, with all its clouds and shadows, is, in spite of the overhanging and dense darkness, very distinct and of clearest outline. What, now, is its significance, as interpreted by the prophets of the time? The meaning is at once so striking and so far-reaching as to make its presentation within a short space very difficult. Remembering for the moment that Jeremiah had already gained a clear conception of the doctrine of individualism, and that his conception of the new influence meant a covenant henceforth between Jehovah and the individual, rather than between Jehovah and the nation; remembering also that Ezekiel had gone a step still farther, and had formulated the doctrine of solidarity, the complement of Jeremiah's thought concerning individualism; we may ask ourselves the significance found by the prophets of the exile and the people in what must have seemed a complete

revolution of life and thought. Some of these points may perhaps be summarized and classified briefly as follows:

1. If the exile has come contrary to the wishes of Jehovah, and Babylon's gods are stronger than the God of Israel, it means a sore defeat for Jehovah and a practical acknowledgment that he is God only of a certain territory, and that within the bounds even of this territory he is not all-powerful. Such a view, though accepted at least by the masses of Israel, could not approve itself to the prophets and those who still had faith in the prophetic message. The alternative, therefore, must be, that the exile was a part of Jehovah's plan; that, after all, it was he who had sent them into captivity, and that he had done so because of failure on their part to obey his commands. The prophets, consequently, saw in the punishment which had thus come upon Israel a clear and definite punishment for faithlessness.

2. If, now, it was in accordance with Jehovah's will that all this had happened, it followed that Babylon and her gods were instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes. Here, then, was the strongest evidence that had yet been given that Jehovah was God, not only of Palestine, but as well of the world, for the greatest world-power was his humble servant. The opportunity to present the omnipotence of Jehovah and his omniscience was a most fitting one. These were doctrines which were eagerly grasped by those who still maintained belief in Jehovah's strength.

3. It being evident that this Jehovah was something greater than a national God, the greatest nations being instruments in his hands, it followed naturally that the world itself was the result of his creative power. There could be but one such God in the universe, and of necessity the universe must have come from his hands. Such a God, moreover, must be a God of majesty and power, and with his residence no longer simply in Jerusalem. A larger horizon presents itself, which perhaps as yet appeals to a part only even of those who were most faithful.

4. Some explanation, however, must be found for the sufferings of those who had not sinned against Jehovah. As has been

seen, the greatest suffering was that of the faithful, and not that of the faithless, and yet the faithful had done nothing for which they should be punished. They were innocent, and yet sufferers. This was contrary to the philosophy of the past, in accordance with which it was generally understood that suffering could only be explained on the ground that the sufferer had been guilty of sin for which he was now being punished. The prophet, led by the Holy Spirit, discovers a new explanation for suffering—these faithful Jews are suffering vicariously. They are in Babylon, away from home and temple and fatherland, apparently deserted by God himself, enduring indescribable agony of heart and mind, because of the sins of others. But even more than this, they are suffering in order to make secure the future of Jehovah's kingdom and his cause on earth. They, after all, rather than the nation at large, are the agency constituted by Jehovah for introducing to the world Jehovah's religion. They are not guilty, they are not suffering punishment, except as that punishment has been incurred by the sins of others. Their time of recompense will come, and they will receive double for all they are suffering. It will be their glorious privilege to open the eyes of the blind and to open the doors of captives; through them the great purpose of Jehovah, as it stands connected with world-history, will be accomplished.

5. But in order that this may be realized Israel shall be redeemed and restored again to Palestine. The agent of this redemption will be Cyrus, whose power is already manifesting itself in the distance, and whose course is being guided by Jehovah himself in order that, when Babylon shall have been destroyed as a just punishment for her sins, Israel may be guided home to execute Jehovah's will in the world at large. In view of the magnitude and significance of this event, the exodus, great as it was in Israel's past history, will be forgotten. This return will be the turning-point in the history, not only of Israel, but of the entire world.

6. A new conception of God's relationship to Israel is obtained from the attitude which he has sustained toward the nation in this great calamity. There had grown up through the centuries

a superstitious confidence in God's disposition to protect the people and the city. It had come to be understood that Jehovah was pledged to Israel, and that, come whatever might, he would protect his people. This superstition, which doubtless seemed to be an exercise of great faith, involved a singular error—a forgetfulness of the conditional element in Jehovah's promises to Israel. This conditional element was formulated very definitely by Jeremiah, but the formulation had come too late to affect the mind of the people to any considerable extent. The great ideals of the future pictured by the prophets will be realized only if Israel will obey Jehovah's commands and do his will. No obligation rests upon Jehovah, if Israel is faithless to her part of the agreement. The exile itself furnished, therefore, convincing evidence that Jehovah would send punishment, instead of blessing, even at the cost of the holy city and the holy temple.

7. For the first time in Israel's history it was learned that Jehovah could be worshiped without sacrifice and without temple. Preparation, in part, had been made for this new and significant thought when, nearly a century before, there had been promulgated the book of Deuteronomy, in which there is prohibition of offering sacrifices at any point except in the city of Jerusalem, and in connection with which all the high places were destroyed. The possibilities of a spiritual worship are now for the first time seen. Indeed, if there is to be worship of any kind, it must be spiritual, and the closest and holiest communion between God and man may be secured without external form of any kind.